

**VERMONT RAIL COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
5TH FLOOR BOARD ROOM
NATIONAL LIFE BUILDING
MONTPELIER, VERMONT
April 19, 2005**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sam Lewis, Chairperson

Robert Stannard Eric Bohn
Richard Moulton Charlie Moore
William McCormick Paul Guare
Rep. Albert "Sonny" Audette

OTHERS PRESENT: David Dill, VTrans Deputy Secretary
Dawn Terrill, VTrans Secretary of Transportation
Charlie Miller, VTrans Rail Division
Nancy Rice, VTrans Rail Division
Scott Bascom, VTrans Planning
Chris Andreasson, Vermont Transit Co., Inc.
Anthony Otis, Railroad Association of Vermont
Anne Candon, VTrans Rail Division
Clay Poitras, VTrans

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Sam Lewis called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of February 23, 2005 Minutes

MOTION by Bill McCormack, seconded by Eric Bohn, to approve the minutes of 2/23/05 as written. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

2. Vermont Rail Authority (H.322)

Dawn Terrill and David Dill discussed the study committee proposal for the Vermont Rail Authority submitted to the Senate Transportation Committee. The House Transportation Committee has not taken up the proposal as yet. Richard Moulton mentioned three items flagged by the CMPO that were addressed in the revisions of the proposed legislation, including the Essex to Burlington commuter rail service, having a mass transit segway (multimodal), and expanding the authority to not be so slanted toward the western corridor. David Dill stated there are questions to be answered relative to the relationship between the Rail Authority and the state, financing, property management, liability, sustainability. Charlie Moore applauded the study, but pointed out the need for input from rail operators and including the entire rail network in Vermont. Bob Stannard echoed Mr. Moore's statement. Paul Guare expressed concern the study committee will not have enough knowledge of the subject matter, and suggested the Executive Order for the Vermont Transportation Authority be amended to meet the needs of the state. Also, a staff director who knows the railroad industry should direct the study

committee. David Dill assured rail operators will have input. Dawn Terrill stated Rail Division staff will support the study committee and the Secretary of Transportation will be the chairperson of the study committee.

MOTION by Bob Stannard, SECOND by Charlie Moore, that the Vermont Rail Council endorse the concept and language as stated for the Vermont Rail Authority Study Committee. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

3. State Rail Plan Update

The Rail Council received a copy of the draft Vermont State Rail Plan for review and comment. The Executive Summary format will be modified slightly. Three public hearings have been scheduled: 4/26/05 – CCMPO in So. Burlington; 4/22/05 – Rutland; 4/28/05 – White River Jct. Rail Council members are urged to attend the public hearings. Comments will be accepted until June 3, 2005. Changes/amendments will be made as necessary and the final draft will be available by the June 22, 2005 Rail Council meeting.

Charlie Miller commented the Rail Plan is a guiding document for determination of how rail development in the state will be pursued. The Federal Railroad Administration requires a current rail plan for funding purposes. Vermont's rail plan focuses on issues such as the 286,000 pound rail, clearance, and moving forward with projects to fulfill that vision. The Rail Plan is a policy document stating a focus and direction for the state overall rather than a directive on specific projects. It was noted individual project preferences (such as the Essex-Burlington line and the Congressional earmark, the Burlington rail yard relocation) should be submitted to the Rail Infrastructure Subcommittee. The tunnel in Bellows Falls was specifically mentioned in the Rail Plan because the site has been identified as a choke point for entering the state due to clearance (i.e. addresses the policy to pursue clearance issues). Rick Moulton suggested including language saying "the Bellow Falls tunnel is a good example of a project with weight and regional significance" as a way to highlight a specific project while addressing the clearance issue as a policy statement. Rick Moulton suggested the Burlington projects be added to Page 24, Brief Descriptions of Improvement Projects or Potential Projects. Paul Guare stressed the need to distinguish between policy, a long term plan, and an improvement construction plan. With regard to the Burlington rail yard relocation, Charlie Miller cautioned about the approach with land use issues and rail yards, noting a solid decision is needed for the future on where and how these facilities are developed, taking in the big picture of access to interstate highways and avoiding environmentally sensitive areas.

Sam Lewis asked if there will be a comment and response section in the final document. Scott Bascom stated it was felt this section was too cumbersome for the report and was not an added value.

4. Vermont Rail Advisory Council Annual Report to Governor

Charlie Miller reported the Rail Council's annual report has been given to the Governor and the Legislature. Mike Coates, Paul Guare, and Bill McCormick addressed the House and Senate transportation committees and talked about Rail Council activities. Mike

Coates was commended for his presentation. Charlie Miller provided technical support. The transportation committees appreciated the information especially on rail bridges. The effort may result in a bill next year on the 286,000 pound rail issue.

5. Subcommittee on Infrastructure Improvements

Chris Andreasson reported the Infrastructure Subcommittee discussed the Rail Plan and wanted to insert in the Executive Summary some infrastructure items but it appears the Rail Plan as a policy plan is not the appropriate document for this information. Mr. Andreasson also reported the subcommittee discussed some format matters with the State Rail Plan which are being addressed.

6. Economic Development Letter

Charlie Miller noted the draft letter is in response to Dave Wulfson's (Vermont Railway) concern regarding loss of property adjacent to railroad tracks and the property being developed in such a way as to preclude railroad customers. The letter will be sent to the Department of Economic Development, regional planning commissions, regional marketing organizations, MPOs, and regional development corps. Paul Guare suggested if the letter leads to a program, then the to-be-established Rail Authority should implement the program. The letter should be modified to address this. Bob Stannard suggested the House and Senate transportation committees and all legislators receive a copy of the letter. Rep. Audette suggested language be included clarifying the intention not to bypass local planning and zoning. Jeff Munger noted state standards for projects say local planning and the citizenry must be involved in planning.

There was discussion of the development of property along rail sidings, and rail sidings being considered assets. Charlie Moore noted the switch to a siding will only stay in place if a railroad is used for transportation. The cost to put in a switch is approximately \$80,000. There is general agreement that access to rail is generally overlooked in economic development planning.

Clay Poitras, VTrans, suggested language be added to the letter urging the sharing of information with communities and a contact person be listed for more information. Also, a list of railroads to be contacted by organizations should be included.

7. Spending Plan on ABRB-E

Charlie Miller reported the state is developing a spending plan for the Albany-Bennington-Rutland-Burlington-Essex rail line (western corridor). The elements will be broken down into manageable projects. More information will be provided to the Rail Council at the next meeting for comment.

8. Joint Meeting with Other Advisory Councils

Sam Lewis noted a date for a joint meeting of the advisory councils (Rail, Aviation, Public Transit, Operations) has not yet been set.

9. RRA Economic Study

Tabled until the next meeting of the Rail Council.

10. Other Business

None.

11. Next Meeting/Agenda Items

Next Meeting: June 22, 2005, 1 p.m. – 4 p.m., National Life Building, Montpelier.

Agenda Items:

- RRA Economic Study
- State Rail Plan (final draft)
- ABRB-E

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by M.Riordan, Recording Secretary.

“TO DO” List from 4/19/05 Rail Council Meeting:

1.